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NBC BRIEFING

27 May 1958

- I. As result of 4 May elections Communist Neo Lao Hak Zat Party has emerged as most dynamic political force.
 - A. On basis near-complete returns, Commies and affiliates will have won possibly 14 of 21 contested assembly seats.
 - B. They may get two allies from old members giving them possible 16 out of total 59 seats.
 1. In addition, they may get additional support from opportunistic deputies.
- II. Conservative defeat due to split ticket, failure to reach rural masses, and widespread resentment against government corruption. Conservatives actually grossed ^{majority} plurality of votes.
 - A. By contrast, Communists had well-organized campaign, behind single slate on effective platform of supporting the crown, established traditions, and reform.
 1. Communists' main strength in rural areas.
- III. Current Commie strategy apparently is to urge retention of present government, with its two Commie members, rather than push for greater representation on basis election showing.
 - A. This tactic intended to lull conservative fears.
 - B. Commies could switch tactics and with cooperation of opportunists in assembly, try to bring about dissolution of assembly and early general elections, which they would win.

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- IV. Prospects poor for unified action by conservatives against Communist threat.
 - A. Ambassador Smith reports no discernable trend among conservatives since election to forget past squabbles and close ranks.
 - B. Smith concludes that unless present trend of "business as usual" is reversed, Commies may be expected to take over Laos by legal means in 1959 elections.
- V. Possibility of rightist coup by Laotian military exists if government coddling of Communists continues.
 - A. Preliminary plans for coup being drafted by army leaders and defense ministry officials.
 - B. Imminent army intervention in situation not foreseen but capability "take over" any time exists.
- VI. Continuing Communist gains in Laos will have considerable impact on other Southeast Asian countries which border on Laos--Thailand, Burma, Cambodia and South Vietnam.
 - A. At least, sentiment for neutrality will be increased.

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